headquarters of the Administration. The manufacture of country spirit gives employment to a considerable number of persons, most of whom are females. At a recent census of the country stills in the district, undertaken by the district officials, the number of stills has been found to be 1,530. There must be at least one person employed at each still, so that the number of distillers is probably not less than 2,000, possibly more. The spirit is distilled both for home consumption and for purposes of sale, in some villages almost entirely for sale. In the Jaintia Hills stock-breeding and dealing in cattle provides occupation for 1,295 people, according to the last census. The cattle are reared in the Jaintia Hills and are driven down to the plains when they reach the age of maturity, where they find a ready market amongst the Sylhetis. Cattle are also driven into Shillong for sale from the Jaintia Hills. Another place for rearing cattle is the Siemship of Nongkhlaw, where there is good pasturage in the neighbourhood of Mairang. These cattle are either sold in Shillong or find their way to the Kamrup district by the old Nongkhlaw road. Cattle-breeding is an industry which is capable of expansion in these hills. There are a few carpenters to be found in Shillong and its neighbourhood. The Khasis are said by Col. Waddell to be unacquainted with the art of weaving; but the fact that a considerable weaving industry exists amongst the Khyrwang villages of the Syntengs, and at Mynso and Sohtings, has been overlooked by him. The Khyrwangs weave a special pattern of cotton and silk cloth, striped red and white. In Mynso and Sohtings similar cloths are woven, also the sleeveless coat. In former days this industry is said to have been considerable, but it has been displaced to a large extent of late years by Manchester piece goods. The number of weavers returned at the last census in the district was 525. The Khasis and Mikirs of the low country, or Bhois as they are called, weave cotton cloths which they dye with the leaves of a plant called u nah. This is perhaps the wild indigo, or nam, of the Shan settlers in the Assam Valley. The weavers are almost always females. An important means of subsistence is road and building work; a considerable number of Khasis, both male and female, are employed under Government, practically throughout the year, in

16: McCormack E-4,9 (1956-1959) 1964
[P. 106A] AR? Khasi AR?

rice and chemical fertilizers. Both level land and hillsides are cultivated by the same hand techniques. 1 - 6-foot patches are fashioned with walkways between, soils are overturned within the patches and allowed to dry, the soils are burned slowly and the ashes spread over the soil, and finally the seed is sown, either broadcast or sunk with the aid of the typical Khasi hoe. The rabbier part of the upland raises a two-crop year, and Khasis often double crop as well. Paddy has long been found in the lowlands, in parts of Jaintia and Khasi, the only places where the plow is found. Nowadays paddy is more and more seen in the uplands, together with a simple terracing and irrigation technology. Many upland Khasis have house gardens in which they raise a wide variety of vegetables, including pumpkins, cabbage, radishes, sweet potatoes, eggplant, and many others. Important crops in Khasi country are paddy rice, taro, cucurbitaceae, cotton, bananas, and pineapples, in War, there are betel nut, pan leaf, oranges, and sugar cane. **Fishing and hunting.** Fishing is done by poisoning streams, but this is a subsistence activity only in the southern foothills. Hunting was formerly by bow and arrow or by traps, including spring guns and pitfalls, but was always primarily a sport. [Cf. Dragoniller 1908.] **Gathering.** Khasis once gathered about 100 species of wild plants, most of them for food, but some for medicine. Thrifty villagers still gather food plants, but there is no real dependence on gathering. Medicinal plants continue to be very important. **Domestic animals.** Fowl, goats, pigs, and cattle are bred both for meat and sacrifice. Milk was formerly not utilized, but is now so popular that specialists keep herds of milch cows. Pigs are used as village scavengers, but sometimes receive prepared food. Cattle and goats forage freely in the fields during the winter, but are herded by a communally hired herdsboy during the agricultural season. Most households keep chickens, primarily for their eggs, and a few keep ducks. A few horses are also seen. Dogs are partials, except for hunting dogs. Cats are popular. **Food and abstinence.** The staple food of Khasis is boiled rice, together with the dried fish which is imported from Sylhet. Boiled beef, pork, and chicken are relished, but beyond the means of most. Meals are taken twice a day, in the morning and evening, although farmers also take a midday meal in the field, and others may take tea and cold sweet potatoes or rice bread. Certain foods are taboo to certain sibs. Stimulants are extremely common, especially betel nut, which is often accompanied by a bit of tobacco. Tobacco is also smoked as cigarettes and in hookah and other pipes. Every village has one or more household taverns, where distilled rice whisky is cooked and sold by the glass and by the bottle. Imported opium had spread widely in the mulberry Khasi country, but controls instituted in the 1940's have been fairly successful. All stimulants were once taken by men, women, and

241 243 199 178 244 241 189 226 224 222 [278] 231 [230] [233] [235] 262 264 262 189 276 279 276 276 177

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

There is considerable trade carried on in
845 439 *nzpát* or bay leaves, the trees being extensively cultivated by the inhabitants of the lower slopes of the hills on the Sylhet border. The finest oranges in India are also grown in groves in the same tract, the value of the trade in which is now (1876) estimated to amount 237 to £3760 per annum. Lac is gathered by the Mikirs in the Jáintiá 499 Hills, but not to *any* great extent. Bees are both domesticated 231 and found wild, and an extensive trade in bees-wax is carried on, the amount exported being estimated at from three hundred to four hundred *mannds* annually. The whole of the Hills, where there is • 233 no forest, and where the land is not under cultivation, consists of 621 rich pasture grounds, which are held in common by the villagers 651 and pay no revenue to Government.

137 The forests of the Khási and Jáintiá Hills do not yield much profit either to the British Government or to the chiefs. There [648] are no reserved forests in the District; and according to the Deputy-[659] Conservator, the total area of unreserved forest, *i.e.* of land covered with timber trees and not at present required for *jhúm* cultivation, is only 150 square miles. The trees found are chiefly pine, and those classified as 'mixed upper hill forests.' At an elevation of 3000 feet, the Pinus Kasia predominates over all other vegetation and forms almost pure pine forests. It is found also at lower heights, and there attains larger dimensions, but only in the case of isolated trees. The 'mixed upper hill forests' are confined to a series of sacred groves, which clothe the topmost ridge of the watershed between the valleys of the Brahmaputra and Surmá. The characteristic trees are those of a temperate vegetation, chiefly consisting of oaks, chestnuts, magnolia, Schima, Cinnamomum, Prunus, Engelhardtia, etc. There are also numerous other timber trees, including the valuable *sál* (Shorea robusta) and the rubber tree (Ficus elastica); but on the whole the Khási Hills are remarkable for the [648] absence of forest. Early in 1874-75 measures were taken to put a [659] stop to the indiscriminate burning of the forests, and the Siems and village officers were made responsible for the conservancy of the sacred groves. These endeavours have met with some success; but it is a very difficult thing to change the habits of a population, or to induce uncivilised tribes to incur a small temporary inconvenience for the sake of future benefit. The total area directly protected from fire during the year 1875-76 is returned at 3618 acres; the expenditure was Rs. 122; and in ten prosecutions for breaches of forest rules, twenty-three persons were convicted.